

1984

The Sea in Soviet Strategy

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Recommended Citation

Westwood, James T.; Ranft, Bryan; and Till, Geoffrey (1984) "The Sea in Soviet Strategy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 37 : No. 4 , Article 18.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol37/iss4/18>

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documentation is thorough and rigorous, and the book contains an adequate selected bibliography and commendable index. Indeed, it has ample attraction for novice and specialist alike.

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Ranft, Bryan and Till, Geoffrey, *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983. 240pp. \$21.95

Researched and written by two experienced British maritime specialists, this is a book well worth reading. It is an exposition of Soviet naval power, accomplishments, disposition and status in the 1980s—set in a context of USSR foreign and domestic politics, problems and prospects. It includes a survey of Russian naval history from the onset of the Soviet regime to the present time.

The principal parts of the book are balanced and explicit discussions of Soviet ideological, political and economic imperatives, foreign policy, military doctrine, strategic situation, naval history, naval inventory and its attributes, naval missions and objectives, and the naval outlook. There is something in this book for almost everyone who is interested in the Soviet Navy. Indeed, this book is among the most fit of all such books to appear over the last twenty-plus years in its potential appeal to the general professional reader, the student and the specialist alike. Those who know the most about the Soviet

Navy will read this book with steady interest, perhaps a trace here and there of fascination and will see their words and thoughts coming back to them. Other readers, wishing to become better informed, will be enlightened by Ranft and Till's work.

Among the most pertinent and prolonged issues in the study and analysis of the Soviet Navy is one which concerns itself with anti-SLOC capability and designs—without regard to how Soviet mission priorities seem to be arranged and inferred. US defense analysts dealing with power projection are concerned about America's dependency on sea transportation, commercial and military. The authors devote tightly packed ten pages to this issue and, lest they be faulted for underplaying, Ranft and Till expand elsewhere on Soviet pro-SLOC—the “southern sea route” connecting the otherwise disconnected western and eastern parts of the megalithic USSR by a 12,000 nm external sea line between the giant ports of Odessa and Nadhodka.

In Western naval circles, our knowledge and understanding of the Soviet Navy has slowly, sometimes haltingly, grown and matured over the period of Admiral of the Fleet of the USSR Sergei G. Gorshkov's nearly thirty years as Soviet Navy commander in chief. Nowadays, we know a lot more about the Soviet Navy than we once did. *The Sea in Soviet Strategy*, a wide-ranging and of a depth suitable to its length, is among the very best compendiums of and witnesses to that growth of

knowledge, appreciation and insight. Written mostly from secondary sources, the authors have "sampled" nearly, if not all, of the leading published Western authorities and specialists on the Soviet Navy. The works of prominent and respected analysts, publicists and historians, such as Herrick, McGwire, Daniel, McConnel, Dismukes, Weinland, Athay, Booth, Kehoe, Jones, Kennedy, Manthorpe, Kaber, Mitchell, Rohwer, Petersen, Sick, Vego, Wegener, Ruge, Polmar and Watson are cited and quoted. The bibliography is a virtual "homecoming" for Soviet naval analysts, including that one signal essay of Professor George Hudson, "Soviet Naval Doctrine and Soviet Naval Politics," published in 1976. Nevertheless, nothing is perfect, for there are no references to the works of Drs. Norman Friedman and Jacob Kipp. Regardless, in balance, insight, understanding and articulation, this is a far better and more relevant book on the Soviet Navy than almost all others which have appeared in the last decade.

The only major weakness in the book is its truncated, light treatment of Soviet naval command/control/communications/intelligence (C³I), a premier aspect of all Soviet military forces and developments in this, the countermeasures era (1980-2000). This missing ingredient is surprising in view of the extraordinary work of another British writer, Brig. John Hemsley, in "Soviet Troop Control," published in *Brassey's*, in 1982. Also missing is a treatment of the imminent Soviet sea-launched stra-

tegic cruise missile (SLCM), which, along with the Soviet attack aircraft carrier of the 1990s, will have profound and fundamental effects on Western naval tactics, programs, training, thought and literature.

Withal, this is a highly germane book, benchmarking the current state of our collective awareness and the state of the Soviet Navy. Interpretatively, the author's caveat in chapter one should be kept in mind while reading: "In fact, alarmism about the Soviet Navy may be playing the Russian game, since it might give them a capacity to influence events which their real operational strength does not warrant"

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Stokesbury, James L. *Navy & Empire*.
New York: Morrow, 1983. 430pp.
\$16.95

The problems with so-called "survey" histories are twofold. Given the "knowledge explosion" and the proliferation of disciplines, there is the difficulty of writing a balanced and comprehensive—but not superficial—overview of a major epoch or war in 400-500 pages. And there is the problem of producing an interesting and evenly paced narrative. Few current academics appreciate that the writing of history is as much a literary art as it is an exercise in statistics or intellectual theory.

Fortunately some men are aware and able. One, Professor James Stokesbury of Acadia, has made a career of writing excellent short